



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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20 April 2004

### **IRN42471.E**

Iran: Treatment by authorities of failed refugee claimants who are repatriated to Iran; whether refugee claimants who left Iran legally are treated differently from those who left Iran illegally; whether failed refugee claimants returning from Canada face a special risk in light of Zahra Kazemi's death while in the custody of Iranian officials (July 2003 - April 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the treatment by authorities of failed refugee claimants who are repatriated to Iran and whether refugee claimants who left Iran legally are treated differently from those who left illegally, is scarce among the sources consulted.

In a November 2003 news article, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported that the embassy of Iran in Brussels, Belgium, had announced that any Iranian citizen who wishes to return to Iran can do so without any difficulty (8 Nov. 2003). According to IRNA, the Belgian press noted that a number of Iranians had been returned to Iran in the past and had experienced no problems in doing so (IRNA 8 Nov. 2003).

However, in February 2004, the Australian Immigration Minister, Amanda Vanstone, announced that she would not be deporting failed asylum seekers back to Iran reportedly because their safety could not be guaranteed if they were to be returned (Justice for Refugees SA Inc. 17 Feb. 2004).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Ottawa, indicated that it could not provide information on the treatment by authorities of failed refugee claimants who are returned to Iran because the UNHCR office in Iran has never had access to failed refugee claimants who have been returned to Iran (24 Mar. 2004).

On the issue of whether failed refugee claimants returning from Canada face a special risk in light of Zahra Kazemi's death while in the custody of Iranian officials, the UNHCR indicated that it is not aware of any negative effects that Kazemi's death "could have on failed refugee claimants who return from Canada" (24 Mar. 2004). Additional information in this regard could not be found by the Research Directorate among the sources consulted.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time

constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). 8 November 2003. "Iran Says Citizens Free to Return Home 'Without Any Problems or Difficulties'." (FBIS-NES-2003-1108 10 Nov. 2003/Dialog)

Justice for Refugees SA Inc. 17 February 2004. "Media Release: Vanstone Ends Ruddock's Campaign to Forcibly Return Iranian Asylum Seekers."  
<<http://www.justiceforrefugees.asn.au/news/20040217.html>> [Accessed 16 Apr. 2004]

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 24 March 2004. Correspondence from a Senior Protection Officer.

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International (AI), BBC, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2003*, Dialog/WNC, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), *Freedom in the World 2003*, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), *The Iranian*, Iran News Watch, Iran Press Service, Justice for Refugees, Refugees International, United Kingdom - Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United States Committee for Refugees (USCR)

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